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CEREBUS GUYS

no.18

218
MAY

E X C E R P T

Over to the right were shelves of poetry. Those in front of him were prose, a miscellaneous lot. Upwards and downwards they were graded, from clean and expensive at eye-level to cheap and dingy at top and bottom. In all bookshops there goes on a savage Darwinian struggle in which the works of living men gravitate to eye-level and the works of dead men go up or down — to Gehenna or up to the throne, but always away from any position where they will be noticed. Down in the bottom shelves the 'classics', the extinct monsters of the Victorian age, were quietly rotting. Scott, Carlyle, Meredith, Ruskin, Pater, Stevenson — you could hardly read the names upon their broad dowdy backs. In the top shelves, almost out of sight, slept the pudgy biographies of dukes. Below those, saleble still and therefore placed within reach, was 'religious' literature — all sects and all creeds, lumped indiscriminately together. *The World Beyond*, by the author of *Spirit Hands Have Touched Me*. Dean Farrar's *Life of Christ*. *Jesus the First Rotarian*. Father Hilair Chestnut's latest book of R.C. propaganda. Religion always sells provided it is soppy enough. Below, exactly at eye-level, was the contemporary stuff. Priestley's latest. Dinky little books of reprinted 'middles'. Cheer-up 'humour' from Herbert and Knox and Milne. Some highbrow stuff as well. A novel or two by Hemingway and Virginia Woolf. Smart pseudo-Strachey predigested biographies. Snooty, refined books on safe painters and safe poets by those moneyed young beasts who glide so gracefully from Eton to Cambridge and from Cambridge to the literary reviews.

Dull-eyed, he gazed at the wall of books. He hated the whole lot of them, old and new, highbrow and lowbrow, snooty and chirpy. The mere sight of them brought home to him his own sterility. For here was he, supposedly a 'writer', and he couldn't even 'write'! It wasn't merely a question of not getting published; it was that he produced nothing, or next to nothing. And all that tripe cluttering the shelves — well, at any rate it existed; it was an achievement of sorts. Even the Dells and Deepings do at least turn out their yearly acre of print. But it was the snooty 'cultured' kind of books that he hated the worst. Books of criticism and belles-lettres. The kind of thing that those moneyed young beasts from Cambridge write almost in their sleep and that Gordon himself might have written if he had had a little more money. Money and culture! In a country like England you can no more be cultured without money than you can join the Cavalry Club. With the same instinct that makes a child waggle a loose tooth, he took out a snooty-looking volume — *Some Aspects of the Italian Baroque* — opened it, read a paragraph, and shoved it back with mingled loathing and envy. That devastating omniscience! That noxious, horn-spectacled refinement! And the money that such refinement means! For after all, what is there behind it, except money? Money for the right kind of education, money for influential friends, money for leisure and peace of mind, money for trips to Italy. Money writes books, money sells them. Give me not righteousness, O Lord, give me money, only money.

Last Issue's Excerpt: *Of a Fire on the Moon*, Norman Mailer

CEREBUS
NO. 218 MAY 1997

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GUYS
a novel
•
(Cerebus 201 to Cerebus 219)

MONTHLY

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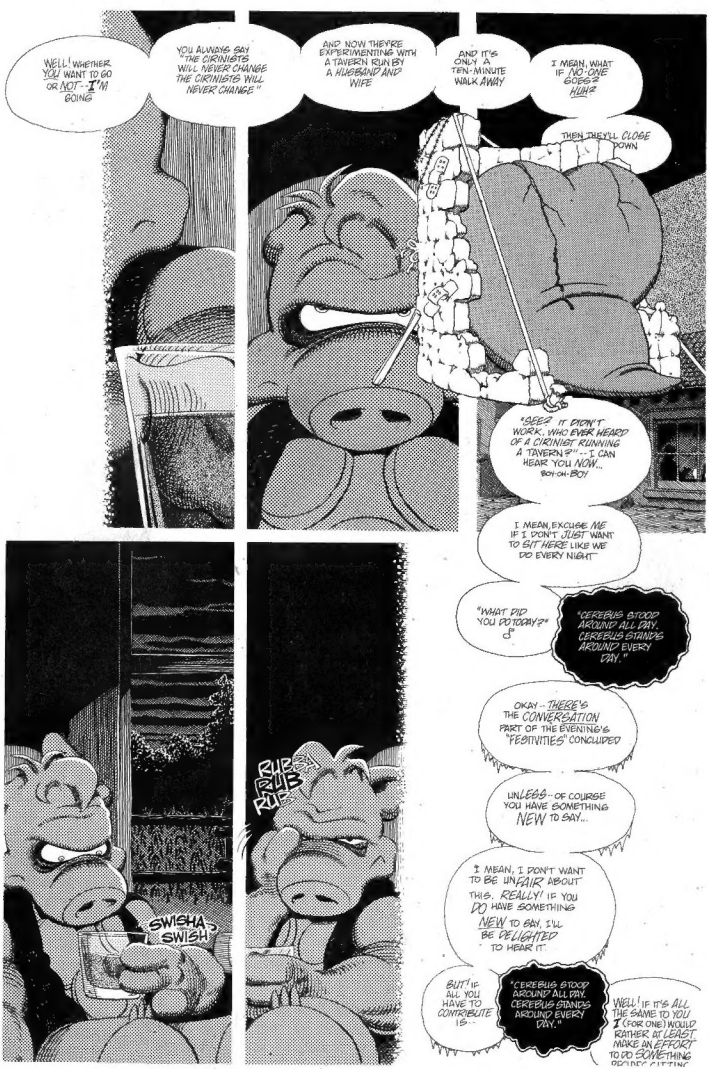
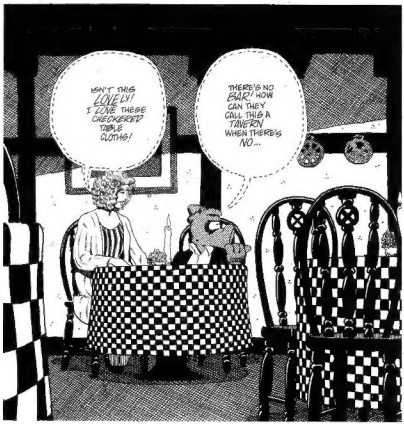

WELL! WHETHER YOU WANT TO GO OR NOT--I'M GOING
YOU ALWAYS SAY "THE CIRINISTS WILL NEVER CHANGE THE CIRINISTS WILL NEVER CHANGE"
AND NOW THEY'RE EXPERIMENTING WITH A TAVERN RUN BY A HUSBAND AND WIFE
AND IT'S ONLY A TEN-MINUTE WALK AWAY
I MEAN, WHAT IF NO ONE GOES? HUH?
THEN THEY'LL CLOSE DOWN
"SEE? IT DIDN'T WORK. WHO EVER HEARD OF A CIRINIST RUNNING A TAVERN?" -- I CAN HEAR YOU NOW... BOY-OH-BOY!
I MEAN, EXCUSE ME IF I DON'T JUST WANT TO SIT HERE LIKE WE DO EVERY NIGHT!"
"WHAT DID YOU DO TODAY?"
"CEREBUS STOOD AROUND ALL DAY. CEREBUS STANDS AROUND EVERY DAY."
OKAY -- THERE'S THE CONVERSATION PART OF THE EVENING'S "FESTIVITIES" CONCLUDED
UNLESS -- OF COURSE YOU HAVE SOMETHING NEW TO SAY...
I MEAN, I DON'T WANT TO BE UNFAIR ABOUT THIS. REALLY! IF YOU DO HAVE SOMETHING NEW TO SAY, I'LL BE DELIGHTED TO HEAR IT.
BUT! IF ALL YOU HAVE TO CONTRIBUTE IS--
"CEREBUS STOOD AROUND ALL DAY. CEREBUS STANDS AROUND EVERY DAY."
WELL! IF IT'S ALL THE SAME TO YOU I (FOR ONE) WOULD RATHER, AT LEAST, MAKE AN EFFORT TO DO SOMETHING
SWISH-A SWISH
RUB RUB RUB

I'M GLAD YOU DECIDED TO COME WITH ME.
AYE.
I HOPE
I HOPE I DIDN'T OFFEND YOU WITH MY:
"CEREBUS STOOD AROUND ALL DAY."
NAY.
"CEREBUS STANDS AROUND EVERY..."
NAY!
NAY.
ACTUALLY CEREBUS HAS BEEN THINKING HE SHOULD... GET OUT... MORE
REALLY?
YOU'RE NOT JUST... SAYING THAT... TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER ABOUT BEING SUCH A NAG?
NAY.
NAY. CEREBUS REALLY... MEANS IT
REALLY

OH GOOD!
I REALLY THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FUN TO GO OUT AND MEET SOME OTHER COUPLES TO MEET SOME OTHER PEOPLE
I JUST LOVE MEETING NEW PEOPLE
OH AYE
CEREBUS DOES TOO
WHAT CEREBUS HATES MEETING ME
CEREBUS LIED, OKAY?
BUT...
BUT...
LOOK, CEREBUS IS LEAVING IN SIX DAYS - SO WHAT DOES IT MATTER
OH!
AYE
AYE
AYE
KLAK
KLAK
DING!
PLEASE.
COME IN.
GOODNESS
HAHA
YOU STARTLED ME
DING DING DING.


WON'T THIS LOVELY CHECKERED TABLE CLOTH!
THERE'S NO BEAR! HOW CAN THEY CALL THIS A TAVERN WHEN THERE'S NO...

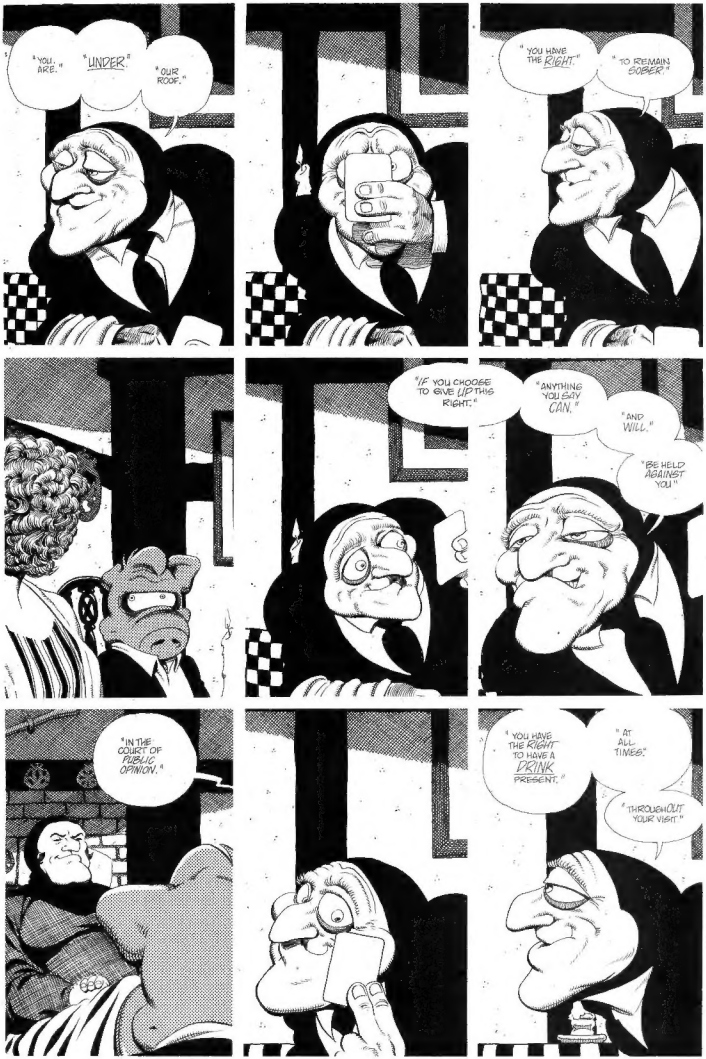
MARTIN!
OH, DEAR
SORRY, BEAR, I WAS JUST
BEAR!

WHY--
CEREBUS!
(AS I LIVE AND...)
AHEM.

!

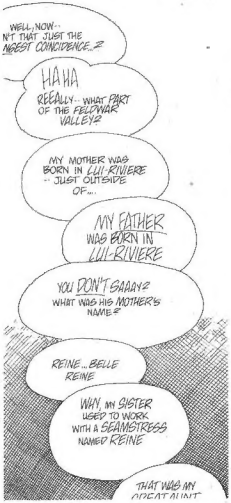
OH!
(HEH HEH)
RIGHT YOU ARE, MY DEAR
RIGHT YOU ARE

AHEM.

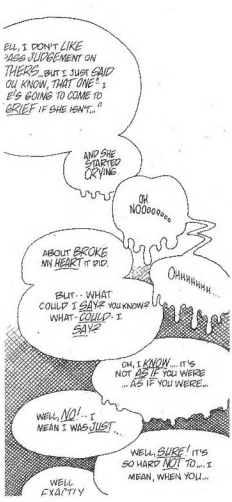

"YOU ARE."
"UNDER"
"OUR ROOF."
"YOU HAVE THE RIGHT"
"TO REMAIN SOBER."
"IF YOU CHOOSE TO GIVE UP THIS RIGHT."
"ANYTHING YOU SAY CAN."
"AND WILL."
"BE HELD AGAINST YOU."
"IN THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION."
"YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO HAVE A DRINK PRESENT."
"AT ALL TIMES."
"THROUGHOUT YOUR VISIT."

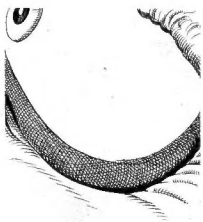
"IF YOU REQUIRE THE SERVICES OF A DRINK."
"BUT CANNOT DECIDE WHICH ONE."
"A DRINK WILL BE APPOINTED FOR YOU."
SHH
SHH
"DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS."
"AS I HAVE EXPLAINED THEM, TO YOU..."
"I DO."
UH...
"BYE."
THEREFORE BY THE POWER VESTED IN ME, I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU
AHHEM
POIT
POIT
POIT
OH!
HEH HEH (THAT'S NOT HOW IT GOES, IS IT)
AH!

"DO YOU WISH TO ORDER A DRINK"
"AT"
"THIS"
"TIME"
OH, YES, PLEASE
I'D LIKE A WHITE WINE
WHITE WINE?
CERTAINLY.
STUFF
AND FOR YOU, MY FRIEND?
(HOW'VE YOU BEEN BY THE WAY?)
FINE, NOW'S YOURSELF?
(CAN'T COMPLAIN, AND YOU?)
(WUGH THE SAME)
(GOOD TO HEAR IT)
(SAME HERE)
CERBERUS WILL HAVE A BOOTH!
PLEASE.
HAVEN'T GOT ANY.
NO?
NOPE! (SORRY)
OH... uh THEN CERBERUS WILL HAVE AN ALE
'FRAID NOT (DOESN'T COME IN 'TIL TOMORROW)
uh -- A STOUT THEN...
GONE SKUNKY I'M AFRAID
A CIDER?
NOT RIPE YET (SORRY)
uh..... A BEER THEN
BEER'S GONE FLAT (SORRY)
uh...
WHITE WINE....
WHITE WINE!
CERTAINLY!
LEAP.
EXCELLENT CHOICE BY THE WAY

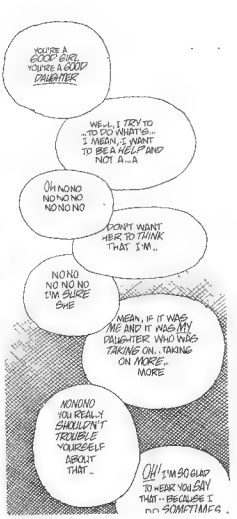

WELL, NOW-- N'T THAT JUST THE NEATEST COINCIDENCE...?
HA HA
REEALLY-- WHAT PART OF THE FELDSPAR VALLEY?
MY MOTHER WAS BORN IN LUI-RIVIERE -- JUST OUTSIDE OF--
MY FATHER WAS BORN IN LUI-RIVIERE
YOU DON'T SAAAY? WHAT WAS HIS MOTHER'S NAME?
REINE--BELLE REINE
WAY, MY SISTER USED TO WORK WITH A SEAMSTRESS NAMED REINE
THAT WAS MY

OH GOODNESS, YES! THEY WERE JUST LIKE 10 PEAS IN A POD -- BUT ALTOGETHER DIFFER MET HER SHE COULDN'T HAVE WEIGHED TWO STO ING WET.... BEDRAGGLED LITTLE THING SHE WAS NOUGH IN HER WAY, BUT I ALWAYS REMEMBER RAGGLY LONG, LONG HAIR -- AND TINY, WEE FACE AI SNIFFLING AND SNEEZING...
MY MOTHER HEARD FROM HER JUST AT THE END OF WINTER -- SHE'S PREGNANT AGAIN...
OH, HOW WONDERFUL!..
THE SMALLER ONE -- WHAT WAS HER NAME? -- NOT ANYBOU THAT'S HER ELDEST... OOOOH -- IT'S!
OOOH -- I KNOW-- IT'S ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE
BESSEMIE?
BODICEA?
BEBE?
BETHENY.
BATHSHEBA!
YES! THAT'S IT! BATHSHEBA

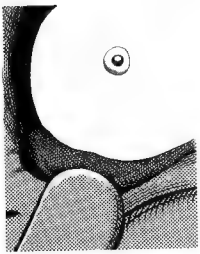

ELL, I DON'T LIKE JUDGEMENT ON THERS... BUT I JUST SAID OU, KNOW, THAT ONE? I E'S GOING TO COME TO GRIEF IF SHE WENT..."
AND SHE STARTED CRYING
OH NOOOoooo.
ABOUT BROKE MY HEART IT DID.
OHHHHHH...
BUT-- WHAT COULD I SAY? YOU KNOW? WHAT- COULD- I SAY?
OH, I KNOW... IT'S NOT AS IF YOU WERE ... AS IF YOU WERE...
WELL, NO!-- I MEAN I WAS JUST...
WELL, SURE! IT'S SO HARD NOT TO... I MEAN, WHEN YOU...
WELL EXACTLY

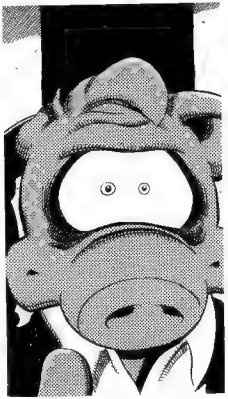


HAHA HAHAHAHA
giggle
OH NO!
SO THERE HE SITS WITH BLUEBERRY JAM ALL OVER HIS FACE
HA HA
OH NO!
ALL OVER HIS BEST CLOTHES
HA HA
OH NO!
giggle giggle
ALL OVE MY NEI CUSHION
OH NO!


YOU'RE A GOOD GIRL, YOU'RE A GOOD DAUGHTER
WELL, I TRY TO ... TO DO WHAT'S ... I MEAN, S HAVING TO BE A HELPMATE AND NOT A ... A
OH NONO NO NO NO NO NO
DON'T WANT HER TO THINK THAT I'M ..
NONO NO NO I'M SURE SHE
I MEAN, IF IT WAS ME AND IT WAS MY DAUGHTER WHO WAS TAKING ON .. TAKING ON MORE .. MORE
NONONO YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T TROUBLE YOURSELF ABOUT THAT ..
OH! I'M SO GLAD TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT .. BECAUSE I DO SOMETIMES

YOU GO BACK .. ACROSS THE PATTERN.
OHHHHH
YOU SEE?
YEEEAAH
YOU SEE WHERE THE BLUE THREAD .. HERE .. THIS PART IT JUST
IT JUST LOOKS AS IF ..
YES! BUT ON THE OTHER SIDE .. THE WINDOW SIDE
THAT'S SO NEAT!
.. IT'S JUST A LITTLE SOMETHING MY GREAT AUNT SHOWED ME WHEN I WAS A GIRL .
WELL, THAAANK YOOOU
OH NOT AT ALL. YOU JUST LET ME KNOW WHAT SORT OF EMBROIDERY YOU DECIDE ON AND I'LL





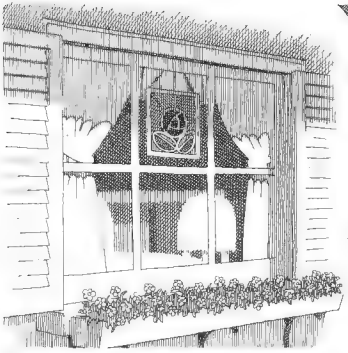
READY TO GO?
HUH?
OH AYE

THAT WAS SO MUCH FUN
MUH?
OH
AYE
DID YOU HAVE FUN?
NAY
OH AYE
WELL I HAD FUN I HAD A LOT OF FUN
IT WAS WEIRD.
HOW MARTY DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING?
BACK IN THE OLD DAYS..
WHAAAT? OH, THAT'S NOT TRUUUE
DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
YOU ASKED HIM WHY HE DECIDED TO OPEN A TAVERN?
OH!
AYE
AND THEN BELIAH ANSWERED CEREBUS
BELIAH.
OH RIGHT (SORRY)
"BEULAH."
SEE, BACK IN THE OLD DAYS - IF MARTY WAS THERE AND YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT
.SAN..
CARPENTRY
HEH.. HE'D ALWAYS SAY "IT MIGHT INTEREST YOU TO KNOW THAT
YOU DON'T LIKE HER.
DO YOU.

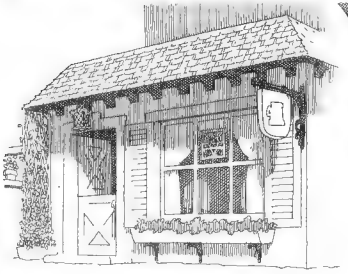
CERBERUS DOESN'T THINK ABOUT HER ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.
REALLY!
ANYWAY (HEH)
MARTY WOULD SAY "IT MIGHT INTEREST YOU TO KNOW THAT AT ONE TIME, I WAS THE THIRD MOST
LOOK.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST SAY WHAT'S REALLY BOTHERING YOU?
HUH?
"HUH!?" "HUH?!"
JUST SAY IT. JUST SAY
"JOANNE? CERBERUS DOESN'T WANT YOU TO MAKE CURTAINS FOR HIS TAVERN."
CERBERUS DOESN'T CARE
YOU WANT TO MAKE CURTAINS FOR THE TAVERN?
MAKE CURTAINS FOR THE TAVERN

OH, THANK YOU "LORD AND MASTER."
YOUR SLIGHTEST WISH IS MY COMMAND!
"CEREBUS DOESN'T CARE."
"CEREBUS DOESN'T CARE."
WOMEN SHOULD BE SEEN AND NOT HEARD... IS THAT IT?
BELLAH AND I ARE SUPPOSED TO JUST SIT THERE?!
WALK!
WHILE YOU... YOU AND... AND MARTY!
"WHILE CEREBUS AND MARTY..." WHAT?
WHAT DID CEREBUS AND MARTY DO?
LET'S JUST
SKIP IT
OKAY?
O KAY

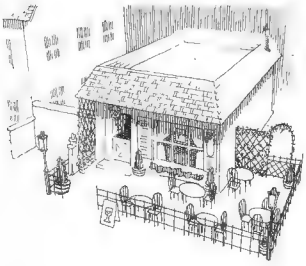
CEREBUS?
MMM?
WHAT IS IT THAT YOU.
WANT
CEREBUS WANTS IT TO BE SIX DAYS FROM NOW
AYE! AYE! AYE!
CEREBUS DOESN'T KNOW, JOANNE
OH

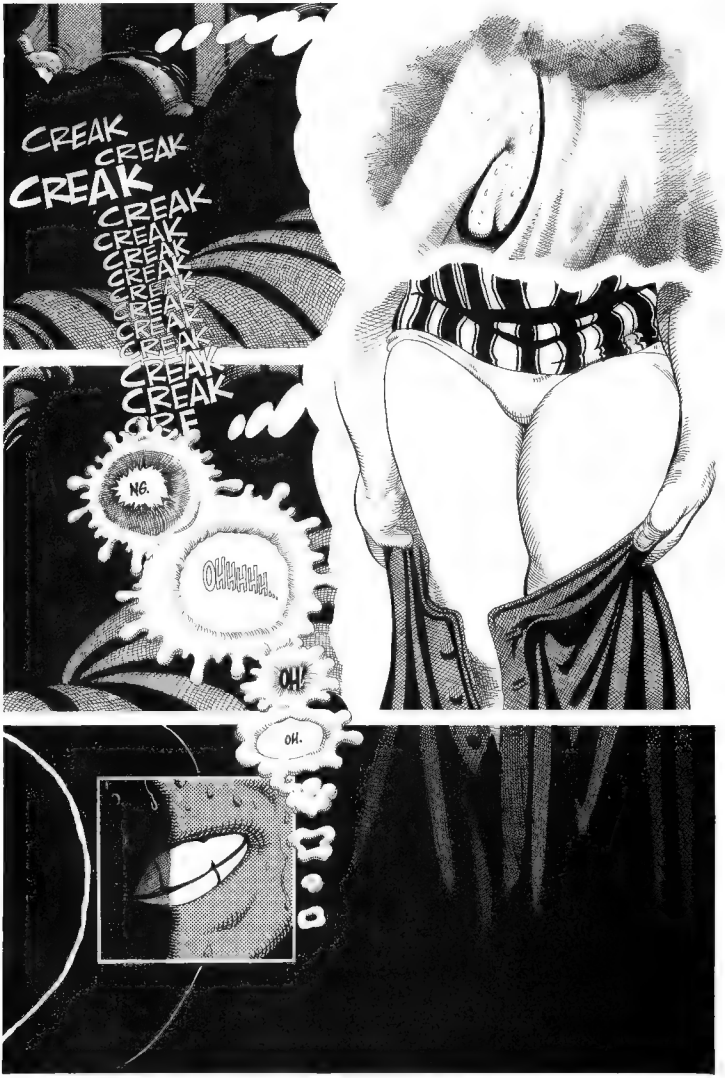


UNH
UNH



UNH
OHHHHH
OHHHHH




CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
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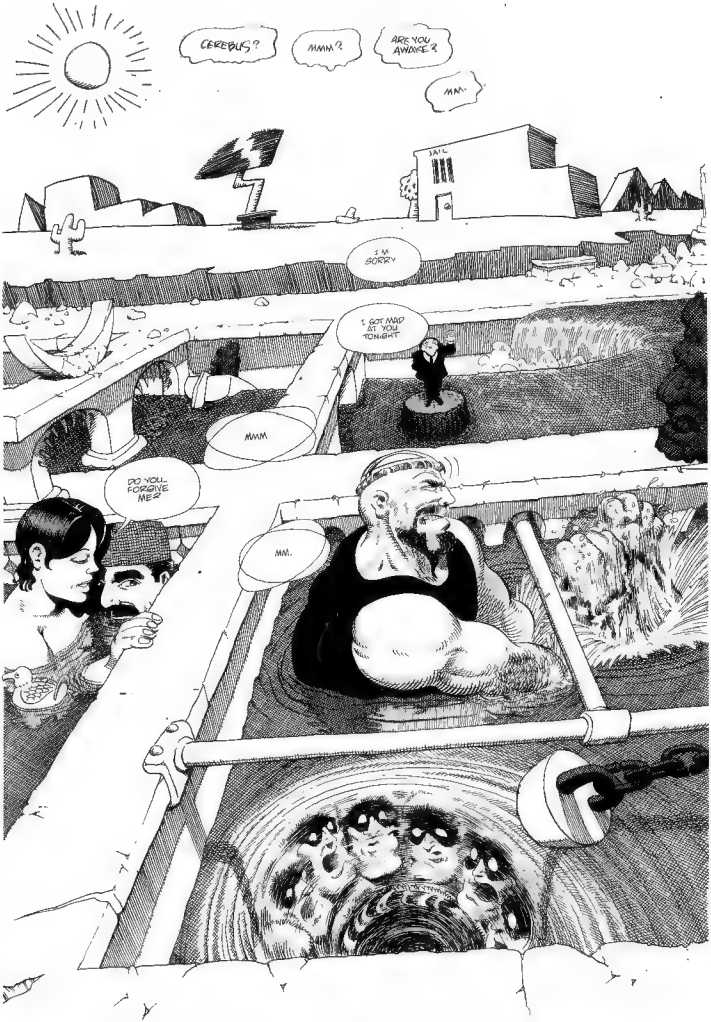
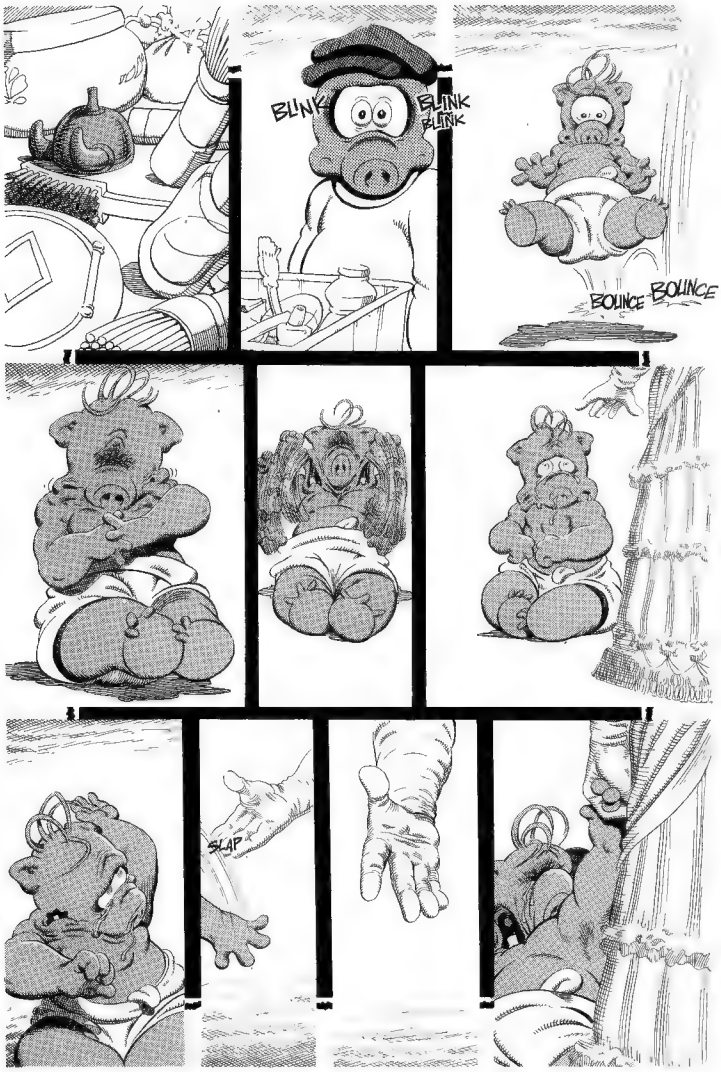
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CRE
NG.
OHHHHHH..
OH!
OH.
O.O.O


CEREBUS?
MMM?
ARE YOU AWAKE?
MM.
JAIL
I'M SORRY
I GOT MAD AT YOU TONIGHT
MMM
DO YOU FORGIVE ME?
MM.

LET'S NOT FIGHT ANYM
MM?
I SAID T'S NOT FIGHT NYMORE
OKAY?
MM
I REALLY HATE T
MM
HTING, EAN

HMMM HMM HM
HMM HMM HM
CLATTER CLATTER CLINK
UL UL UL UL
HMM HM HM
HM HM HM HM
PAT PAT
PAT PAT
HM HM HM
CLATTER
?


BLINK
BLINK
BLINK
BOUNCE
BOUNCE
SLAP

CLAP
CLAP
CLAP

FROM HELL

Part 2

Yes, the impact of relentlessly suppressing the sin of the cities of the plain in the first global Christian Empire while illicitly partaking of the "love that dare not speak its name" shouldn't be underestimated as a large — perhaps largest — dynamic. Although it is easy to do so, given our late-twentieth-century vantage point. And on your most recent thinking — are these events important because they attract so much attention or do they attract so much attention because they're important? A simultaneous "yes" would seem to be both our answers (or...er...all four of our answers).

Let's edge our way back to Dr. Gull I remember thinking, when I hit the first sequence with Queen Victoria, "Well, there goes Alan's knighthood." Bit of a long shot in any case, I suppose, and more's the pity. I've thought Her Royal Majesty (the current one, that is) would be well served by a Rasputin-like figure in proximity, and you could probably make it from Northampton to Buckingham Palace in a couple of hours (if the traffic was good) as required.

I think you might have been of admirable service through the whole Fergie and Di fiasco. Then again, perhaps not.

Anyway, you twice alluded to a dispute with the much-maligned (at least by us) Mr. Campbell in your appendices regarding Victoria Regina. Muckraker that I am, I'd like a blow-by-blow account and — while you're dishing up the dirt — any other points of friction in the creative end of the collaboration.

In all seriousness, you both strike me as very strong-willed and focused in your creativity, and while you were the writer on this project and Eddie the artist, you are also quite an illustrator and Eddie (I'm sure you'll agree) is quite a writer. It would be unnatural if you didn't "lock horns" on one point or another.

I'm afraid this is going to come as a bitter disappointment, but I don't remember any real serious disagreement passing between my ancestrally challenged artist and myself during the entire eight years of the work's duration. I mean, the thing with Queen Victoria wasn't really an issue, and Eddie didn't make half as much fuss about it as implied in my appendix notes. It's just that I don't like to let an opportunity to slander and misrepresent him go by. I don't know why. He's never done anything to me. He just sort of brings it out in me, do you know what I mean?

Basically, he said he felt that I was being, historically speaking, a little unfair and unnecessarily harsh in my portrayal of Queen Victoria and that reality flew out of the window whenever Fat Vicky made an appearance. For my part I was surprised, since I thought reality had flown out of the window with the giant three-headed goat-god in chapter two. Anyway, as far as I remember, I said that he was probably right, but that I didn't much care because I thought that the Hanoverians could pretty much look after themselves and that having one's descendants own roughly a third of all property in the British Isles might go some small way to providing solace for being portrayed as a miserable old cow in *From Hell*. Also, I promised that I wouldn't be having any more appearances from Victoria, so Eddie needn't worry himself, and then threw in a couple more scenes with her anyway, just for the sheer heck of it. So, yeah, that's both our OBEs down the shitter really. Ah well.

Other than that, I don't think there's been a single disagreement between us. That's not to say Eddie hasn't occasionally picked me up, quite correctly, on more important historical details, like the occasion where I had Netley driving Gull over a then-uncompleted Tower Bridge and received a stinging and sarcastic doctored photograph of the half-completed bridge with a little tiny coach and horses plunging over the unfinished edge of the structure and into the Thames below, complete with a little "Yaaaagh!" word balloon. He thinks he's clever and funny, but he isn't. It's not big to make fun of people's genuine and inadvertent mistakes like that; it's just childish.

I suppose that you would expect more quarrels, really. I mean, you're right when you point out that Eddie and I are both strong-willed and stubborn people, but then, on the other hand, he puts away three bottles of a particularly mischievous little Chianti before brunch, and I am generally medicated to the point where I can only signal with my eye movements. This means that while we have probably had strong, even violent disagreements, neither of us could remember the thread of his argument for long enough to convey it to the other one, or even why we'd called in the first place. If there is not actual solidarity amongst the deliberately dysfunctional, neither is there any coherent disagreement. That's a working partnership right there.

You should both be able to get a substantial grant from the Betty Ford Clinic for a Guide to Successful Comic-Book Collaboration. If need arises for either corroboration or a ringing endorsement, please don't hesitate to call upon Gerhard and myself.

Now, then. Dr. William Gull.

I'm going to start by paraphrasing certain of your observations from 1988, particularly as regarding ritualistic murder. In those societies which practised the sacrificing of animals and humans to appease their gods, it was as much for the release of mystical energy involved as for anything else. This is something we've "lost track of" in our technological and scientific age, viewing — as an example — the emperors and priests of Rome sacrificing animals and then reading auguries in their entrails as a particularly gruesome and brainless enterprise. And yet it was really just the most

extreme aspect of another way of life where natural phenomena of all sorts could be read as another language. A crow landing on a soldier's shield or an owl showing itself in the daytime had the clearest possible meaning to those living their lives in that context. Evidence would seem to indicate that auspices of this kind had at least as good a success rate as medical diagnosis and a sight better success rate than, say, weather forecasting in our own time. The ritualistic shedding of blood unleashes energy within the perpetrator analogous to the wave of energy — in the external world — that we have already discussed and which is common in considering any murder scene from Dealey Plaza to Nicole Brown Simpson's condominium walkway.

In your research into the psychology of serial killers, I saw a lot in common with my approach to Church & State *and* Mothers & Daughters *— taking a series of scientific "givens" and applying "high-altitude mapping" to the implications that present themselves as story-point touchstones. You don't invent any facts; you just read them differently. In light of your theorising, the ritual and aura phases in the mental cycles of the serial killer take on a whole new dimension and perspective.*

I'm going to give you a chance, now, to clarify some of this — particularly as it applies to your fictional extrapolation of Dr. William Gull — before I get to my specific questions about that breathtaking volume seven.

At the risk of driving this "high-altitude mapping" metaphor completely into the turf, I suppose that as you close in upon or descend towards the narrative from your initial high point of observation, the perspective and parallax adjust themselves around you as you free-fall through the field of information. The picture beneath you doesn't change, but the resolution improves so that what were previously flat features on a two dimensional landscape resolve themselves into a more definite topography. On a flat map, a high mountain might appear identical at first glance to a deep valley. Only when you start to close in on the territory itself does the physical difference become apparent.

Concerning my early notions about the idea of human sacrifice as related to the above, I'd have to say that my perspective modified itself radically during the course of the work. This is not to say that I think my earlier notions are wrong, so much as to say that I now feel I have a broader picture. I still believe that, in some instances, the violation of taboo involved in taking a human life might involve such a ritually powerful psychological shock in the mind of the high priest (or serial murderer) that it propels him over the edge into some desired higher or at least altered state. You could support this with the testimonial of Joseph Kellerman, the serial-murdering "Shoemaker" from Flora Rhetta Schreiber's book of the same name. Kellerman's "aura" phase, during which he suffered from visual and auditory hallucinations, continued right up to and during the actual murders themselves. What's interesting is Kellerman's comment during the book ...and I'm paraphrasing from memory now...that while at first he would have hallucinations, feel weird, hear voices, and then go and kill somebody, as his killing career progressed there came a point where he was committing the murders in *order* to see hallucinations, feel weird, and hear voices. The murders, in other words, became his way of accessing an alien universe — an altered reality.

Like I say, this was my basic prognosis at the opening of *From Hell*, and I think it still holds water. What I hadn't considered, however, was the obverse of the coin: what is the *victim's* relationship to the killing?

Two books led me to what I feel is an improved understanding of this issue. The first was *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*...definitely the most powerful *Grimoire* of magical spells in my extensive collection...which translates the Latin root of the word "sacrifice" as "to make holy." The second book was Patrick Tierney's *The Highest Altar* (Viking Books, 1989), in which the author recounts his travels and studies in Peru as part of a deeper investigation of the nature and meaning of the phenomenon of human sacrifice.

According to Tierney, the object of human sacrifice, at least in the fairly broad region that he studied, was to translate the supposed "victim" into a god, who would then hopefully intervene on behalf of the mortal tribe in the court of the immortals. The best families would compete for the honour of having their son or daughter be the chosen one, after which one child or youth would be selected. This incipient deity would then spend perhaps a year on a grand tour of the country, born aloft on waves of adulation that would make Elvis and Michael Jackson weep with envy. Every step they took would be on rose petals. At the end of the year, they would be made holy. This was often done by taking the child up to the top of some Andean peak, seating them in a beautifully decorated shrine full of offerings, administering an anaesthetic drug, and then leaving them to die of exposure. This is actually one of the best ways to die, by all accounts, since the body and mind simply sink into a warm, coma-like torpor and sleep from which they never wake up. With this shucking of the gross material body, the essence of the child would be free to make its way into the tribe's visionary afterlife landscape and take its place amongst the gods, remembered and petitioned by its people forever.

Now, while it might seem a considerable leap from some mountain-top bower of incense and tropical flowers to what Iain Sinclair referred to as the meat decor of Miller's Court, I think that some intriguing observations are made possible when the Whitechapel murders are considered in this rarefied context. For example, the statements made by Whitechapel women of the period, that I was discussing earlier, to the effect that they wouldn't mind being a victim themselves if it made people say nice things about them. These superficially tragic and desolate sentiments take on a different and more resonant cast if considered in the light of Peruvian families competing for *their* child to be chosen as the one made holy. It's as if those women had

the idea that a lifetime of regret and mean, impoverished living could be wiped clean with one sudden movement of the right knife, in the right hands. Literally at a stroke they would be transformed into a local saint, as Polly Nicholls had been, as Mary Kelly had been.

My own ideas about the nature of the magical experience revolve around the concept of an "Idea Space," in which some of the more complex of these entities might actually be considered to be "alive" in some special sense. Within this framework, the idea of sacrifice takes on a slightly different colouring. I myself have made sacrifices in a ritual context, but since I'm in the unfortunate position of being a diabolist *and* vegetarian, I'm afraid living sacrifices were out of the question. My own solution is to consider the mechanics of the act of sacrifice in the following light: if you wish to make a supplication to a supposed entity that is composed entirely of ideas and lives in a realm composed entirely of ideas, then it should be clear that something physical would be of no use whatsoever to such a hypothetical being. Such a being would not traffic in actual *things* so much as in the *ideas* of actual things.

Now, let us accept for the moment that any entity or object that we can perceive in the material universe is composed of two basic components. Firstly, there is the reality of its actual physical being: its material presence in space or time. Then, there is the *idea* of the object or entity, an immaterial presence unbounded by the same considerations of space and time. As a ready example, I could cite the death of a loved one: the physical presence is gone, broken down to its constituent chemicals, its constituent atoms. That person does not exist physically anymore as a discrete physical entity. The Idea-Presence of that person cannot die, however. It hangs around and wakes you up crying at four in the morning. Five years later it taps you on the shoulder while you're doing the washing up and it makes you smile.

In my own ritual sacrifices, I have burned objects of meaning and significance to me, including the original to one of the magical drawings I sent you a while back. The idea is to sacrifice, in the conventional sense of "giving up," something which is of value to me. It is also to remove the physical component of the object, leaving only the memory or Idea Space presence of the object intact. In my terms, this removal of the physical component makes the object "sacred," i.e., existing only on a level above the tangible and material world.

Richard Dawkins, author of the excellent *The Blind Watchmaker* and a staunch materialist who would have no truck at all with any of my vague metaphysical notions, would maybe describe this "Idea Presence" as the sum of a person's *memes*, a sort of idea-space equivalent of genes, an ideological genetic code that will endure after the death of the individual and continue to interact with the material world. Dawkins cites the fact that while there are no measurable genetic traces of the philosopher Socrates to be found anywhere in the world, there are *memetic* traces to be found on every hand: Socrates' ideas are still current and still have their effect upon the world of human thinking. My own ideas are perhaps a tad more mystical than Dawkins', but he provides a useful model.

In terms of the Whitechapel crimes, we cannot establish a real material physical identity for the being we call Jack the Ripper. Not Gull, not Druitt, not Stephen, and certainly not poor old bloody James Maybrick. Jack the Ripper, in a very real sense, never actually had a physical existence. He was a collage-creature, made from crank letters, hoaxes, and sensational headlines. He exists wholly in Idea Space, looming forward from our books of theory and our fictions, from our slasher films and our contemporary mythology of serial murder, from the pages and appendices of *From Hell*. He is unencumbered by a physical body or human identity. He has transcended human reality to become, like it or not, one of our immortals.

In a sense, it might also be said that in choosing his victims, he elected them to the same extra-human estate that he himself was destined for. Five anonymous Whitechapel women now live in the realm of legend forever, are translated from weak and ailing flesh into symbols, martyrs, saints of a kind. Look at the grave marker to Marie Jeanette Kelly, "the primadonna of Spitalfields," erected in Leytonstone churchyard by besotted ripperologist John Morrison. If the realm of concept and consciousness is, as I believe it to be, truly the realm of the sacred, then in the crucible of the Whitechapel murders, both killer and victims were in a sense "made holy."

I'm reading the Old Testament right now and — as pertains to our discussion here — the sacrifices made to the God of Israel by his chosen people have given me much food for thought. In David's Psalms he makes reference (I'm paraphrasing obviously) that the ritual sacrifice of seven bulls, seven sheep, etc., which had been a centrepiece of worship to that point, were not really...necessary? Required? Appreciated? History has certainly shown that the Bible has as many interpretations as there are readers, but it seemed to me that God was grudging in his tolerance of the Priesthood, the Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, ritual sacrifice. A kind of: well, fine, if that's what you want, by all means — just don't forget the Ten Commandments Which the Tribes of Israel always did. I found myself wondering if the sacrifice wasn't tolerated by God because it had a kind of energising, focusing effect that was useful in keeping the easily distracted and tempted mass of the congregation within the fold. Rather like the unleavened bread as a metaphor for racial purity. Certainly God seems to save his greatest wrath for those who "pass their children through the fire" — human sacrifice — as well as those stiff-necked women with their groves and graven images and baking cakes for the Queen of Heaven (!), which seems to be an implication of tolerating sacrifice of any kind. Let them burn the flesh of a few bulls and sheep, and before you know it they're burning incense and sugar cane and their kids to Baal and his (or her) mates.

Now, meanwhile back at old Gull, I'm not sure if you intended his dismembering of Mary Kelly — that is, the way you portrayed it — to draw an interesting parallel between medical science and magic ritual, but I found that part genuinely engaging (in a terrifying sort of way). Hinton appears to him only after the initial bloodletting and as he begins to bank the fire into an inferno. Then...then!...the nearly poetical description of his autopsy, his demeanour calm, his voice even and measured, being a kind of intonation or invocation clearly heightening his awareness as he subsides into a hypnogogic trance state.

Harking back to our conversation in '88, I was prepared for the sudden, larger insight which takes hold of him (or he of it) on page 19 of Chapter 10.

If it isn't "giving away the game," I was wondering if you might fill in the blanks represented by panel 6 on that page and the last panel on page 19 and the first panel on page 20. If it were any other writer, I'd pass them off as window-dressing and gobbledygook. In your case, I'd be willing to bet that these panels constitute — at the very least — either a "Eureka! That's it" insight you yourself achieved at some point in researching From Hell *(and you can certainly be forgiven for not sharing it with me and my readers if it came at some personal cost to you) or an intimation of a finished puzzle whose pieces you're rearranging from time to time but which haven't coalesced into anything coherent beyond the state at which they arrived in your own awareness*

Or am I way off base here?

The scene in question was something that evolved from my own experiences and ruminations concerning the non-ordinary consciousness; the magical state; the process of going mental; call it what you will. Obviously, I'd had some of the conceptual groundwork for the scene floating around for years, and all of the gross physical mechanics of the situation were as set down in the doctor's report of a century earlier. What I didn't have until comparatively recently was any clue as to how the occurrence in Miller's Court might actually feel to the perpetrator, beyond, that is, the statistical analyses of serial murder compiled by Robert K. Ressler and the F.B.I's VIVAP program. Those lucid behavioural profiles were too sharp, too clinical: a virtual and digitised reconstruction of the murder scene that was mathematically accurate but necessarily bloodless. I needed something at once less distinct and more authentic. More blurred and less objective. Something that made more sense, by making less.

In my own experiences of an influx of apparently "magical" consciousness, notably in the more intense instances, the actual condition could be described as very much like what is known in psychiatric terms as a "fugue state." As the name implies, this is a state of consciousness very much like a musical fugue, though not always as harmonic or uplifting. As with a musical fugue, several different strands of information, the mind's music, are being played at once. As with a musical fugue, an attempt to focus on one particular strand of the arrangement will render you unable to hear the unified whole, and vice versa: in order to enjoy the piece as a whole work, you must forgo briefly the pleasure of listening to the progression of the individual and separate musical structures that it is composed from. In terms of listening to music, this is a harmonious experience. In terms of human consciousness, it is much more likely to be disorienting, overwhelming, even terrifying.

During the fugue state, the mind is like a twenty-four-track mixing disk with separate strands of complex information on each separate track. The engineer responsible for the final mix that is one's consciousness, unfortunately, is a baboon. Tracks (of thought) suddenly blast in out of nowhere or just as suddenly drop out of existence. Melody swells up, is gone, its presence only registered moments later. Both speakers cut out, and when they cut back in there are six of them. One is playing what sounds like Inuit opera, another broadcasts a debate on superstring theory conducted entirely in a Maori dialect. At some point during all this, the rational everyday self that is frantically trying to weave all this alien sensory input into something that at least nods to conventional reality, very sensibly takes the coward's way out. It gives up, shouts "Danger, Will Robinson" a couple of times, then shoots out blue sparks, and falls onto its side. It dies. This forces the self that exists *behind* our "front identity" to take over the wheel of the moving vehicle After that, it gets rather difficult to describe, firstly because what is going on isn't remotely human, and secondly because one's self isn't actually present while all this is occurring. Whoever is in control of the vertical and horizontal, as it were, isn't you. Recollection of the experience is necessarily non-linear, fragmentary. Time, mind, identity, cause and effect...all of these have been behaving in unusual ways. A certain confusion is forgivable.

As regards Chapter Ten, what I wanted to convey was a sense of this, of Gull's mounting fugue state as he tunes into voices from times past, visions of the inner body, different levels of perception, and different perceptions of his own identity. The brief, endless instant of being obsessed, possessed, ridden, or taken over by one of the archetypes, the god forms. The shattering and sudden knowledge that you are not you, have never been you, are only a fragile and temporary mask for...I don't know. Shit, I write comics, okay? I don't know...for essential Platonic entities/events, for the Great Old Ones, for Cthulhu. For things that are more like language, or embedded codes, than they are like life, although they live. Things that are no more than an eternally reiterated acting-out of their own primal legends, things that *are* their own stories. Which stories our own apparently individual thoughts, identities, and actions can only reiterate and repeat. Deities, or sections of the fundamental text whereby are our lives scripted, all of them. The reason that all stories are true is that there is only one story.

William Gull's progressive alteration of the text that is Mary Kelly's physical body shades into William Burroughs, maybe with Brian Gysin as Netley. Cut-up technique, they call it. The scalpel interrupts the

normal linear continuity of things, allows new possibilities. Sometimes, intimations of the future leak through, luminous dribbles of the eternal. The consciousness of the artist, of the writer, or of the beef-sculptor, is changed along with the deliberate disruption of the work in question, of his successful and much-visited Dorset Street installation. Gull drifts in and out of different times, different texts, different identities. The mutilation he is carrying out unfolds in his mind, through escalating levels of metaphor, becomes all mutilations, all murder. The Babylonian Goddess Tiamat, described by Robert Graves as the primal Mother-Deity in her earliest incarnation, is supplanted by the male god Marduk. Their legend reflects this, with Tiamat reinvented as a malignant and evil serpent-monster, a dragon that is slain and dismembered by the solar Marduk during the creation as described in the *Enuma Elish*. Gull, momentarily and forever, becomes Marduk, just as his victim is translated, transliterated into Tiamat. For a moment the flash of becoming is too brief, too instantaneous to register on the doctor's mind. A second or two passes, and the comprehension of what has just happened to him starts to filter through. Enervated, palpitating from the rigors of the experience, he tries to assemble a jigsaw awareness from these burning fragments, but before he can do so the next voice in the fugue enters, the next wave of alien consciousness crashes in, carrying him away.

I can't say much more than the above, Dave, and I apologise for stating the above so obscurely and in such an overwrought manner. There are language difficulties that are attendant to describing these conditions, as I'm sure you appreciate. It's not that I have any reservations about discussing these matters clearly and lucidly; it's just that I can't. There's some sort of quantum uncertainty law in operation that means that if a thought is pinned down too hard, if a thing is defined too exactly, then the essence and life of that experience is not properly conveyed. Like the problem of knowing *either* the velocity *or* the location of a particle, if that makes sense. The problem is in finding a balance where extra-rational phenomena and perceptions can be discussed in a rational way without diminishing them, which is something I'm clearly still working on. Back to you.

I've only experienced it once myself — back in 1979. And, as you say, the human experience is to try to relate it to others, and you do find yourself stuck between the rock of diminishing the experience by trying to express it lucidly and the hard place of expressing it accurately and coming across as ...well, "overwrought" hardly does it justice. It took me about a week to come down far enough to even perceive how I was coming across in conversation: something of a cross between a Travelling Salvation Show preacher and Cthulhu himself. Deni and my mother decided that I needed psychiatric help — not surprisingly and, in retrospect, I can't fault them individually or jointly for their conclusion. I finally got a handle on it...and this is going to sound odd, I know...by learning to portray myself as normal. You know. "What would a normal person say in this situation?" In my day-to-day life, I became an actor portraying Dave Sim—or at least as accurate a portrayal as I could muster from what I remembered of once being that Dave Sim. My interior life, on the other hand, consisted of sorting through the metaphorical filing cabinet which had exploded in my brain over the course of ten or fifteen seconds. There was so much to go through and so much to assess. I remember thinking, "I really should write a book." And then laughing, right? "Idiot, you are *writing a book." And thus was born the concept of the 300-issue maxi-series.*

When Gerhard read our last exchange he couldn't remember the sequence I was asking about — which isn't surprising and, as I told him, the thing that I found really charming and (yes, Alan, thank you for my new word) glamorous about it. Everyone remembers the sudden intrusion of the 20th-century office on the following page, just as everyone will remember (or I hope some of them will) the 300-issue maxi-series. The trigger is of far more interest to me, and I thank you for filling in the missing piece in my particular jigsaw puzzle. I'd talk about the trigger for the 300-issue maxi-series, but fortunately this is your interview, not mine.

Gull finds what he's looking for, doesn't he? Even though he doesn't really know what it is that he's looking for. Inside that eternal moment he achieves the highest possible altitude — his own high-altitude mapping, as it were — but he's a flawed vessel. He's a killer of nearly unimaginable proportions, but he is still only human, flesh and blood. I thought it was a nice touch to have him step up on a desk to deliver (what is to him) a god-like harangue that seems (to us) an almost touchingly pathetic demonstration of his own severely limited, severely human limitations. And afterwards, he knows it's over. Any insights you'd care to share about what your fictional Gull might've thought about as he reflected on his moment, at the apex? Or am I asking you to write another book? I am. I'm asking you to write another book, but since you're doing it for free, I don't mind if it's a short one.

It seems to me that this is really two questions in one envelope. You want me to write two books. Okay

Given the candour of your own comments above, and in light of the fact that some of the more mystical elements of *From Hell* are derived from personal experience and insight, it seems necessary to draw a line between me and my fictional William Gull ("Sidney Greenstreet after a crash course at the Abby of Thelema," as Iain Sinclair recently, with heartless accuracy, described him).

My own responses to the extremities of consciousness outlined above and what happened afterwards were a good deal less dramatic than your own experiences, probably because I'd at least had a few months to get prepared for the event before it happened. I went through the necessary ritual embarrassment of declaring myself to be a magician in the November of 1993, almost like vaccinating yourself with a mild and controlled form of mental breakdown so that you'll

hopefully have sufficient antibodies to fend off the greater madness when it comes.

The lightning bolt proper didn't hit me until the early January of 1994. More importantly, it hit me in the middle of a deliberate (although relatively minor and casual) magical working, and most importantly of all, it didn't hit me when I was alone. I was with another magician, and it hit him too. Thus, to some extent the subsequent tumult of extra-normal experience was what we had asked for and expected (except of course we didn't, not really), and furthermore we each had the other's confirmation and validation for some of the more peculiar moments.

The couple of months of preparation, were, I think, vital. Your filing cabinet analogy is an excellent one, in that it seems our ability to cope with experience, any experience, depends upon our ability to instantly sort experience into the extensive perceptual filing system that facilitates our view of reality. Crossing a street, quite unconsciously, we are sorting the world around us into different categories in our perceptual filing system: motionless car — no threat. Moving car — slow, not threat — safe to cross the street ahead of it. Moving car — fast, threat — wait at the curb until it's gone past. Woman with perambulator — no threat. Three drunk guys shouting and waving a bottle — threat, avoid.

I'm not saying that we break the whole of reality down into threat/no threat...the process is much more complex, with hundreds of different vectors in our sorting system. While ordering in a restaurant we subject the menu to a filing system organised around "like/don't like." While creating a piece of writing or art we make our creative discriminations along the lines of "good idea/bad idea." The thing is that in all these different instances, in order to make decisions about any of these things, we first have to be able to recognise and identify each phenomenon. We have to know what a slow-moving car is, what a well-done steak is, what a bad artistic idea is. These things have to exist already or have a place in our filing system before we know how to respond to them.

With the magical experience, what happens is that you suddenly get a whole mess of stuff in the in-tray that you don't have the first fucking clue how to classify. This is not a woman with a perambulator, or a well-done steak. This is something that may be a rose, a century, the Platonic essence of the colour green, or all of these at once. This thing over here is a Sqmrlpstgyzlt: it eats a by-product of human jealousy and it shits previously undiscovered prime numbers. The only sane thing to do in the face of sensory input like this is to go mad. The filing cabinet will not cope, its systems of taxonomy exhausted. It spills over in a big flood of disorganised data across the office floor.

By becoming a magician two or three months prior to the catalytic event, in effect I was ordering a bigger filing cabinet ahead of time. When the event happened, I had at least some rudimentary means to classify it within a system and make sense of it. I've heard it said that all of our human perceptions might be seen as our individual windows on the Universe. The magician is consciously attempting to alter his or her window's width or its angle, so as to get a different view of the landscape outside. The schizophrenic, on the other hand, has had his or her window kicked in by some great big astral skinhead in eighteen-hole Doctor Martens boots. Both of them are experiencing the same flood of phenomena and probably many of the same perceptions. The magician, however, has a means of processing this information. The magician has something to bail with. The schizophrenic can only sink beneath the flood. As Aleister Crowley once succinctly put it (and I'm not paraphrasing here), "The only difference between a schizophrenic and myself is that *I'm* not mad."

Anyway, what happened after my own Pentecostal excursion was that I told my friends and family about the experience in the same relatively calm and orderly way I would tell them about any other event. I told them that I was completely aware that my experiences may be delusional, but that as an unusual mental phenomenon I found them interesting in their own right and so worth pursuing. After a few weeks of wandering round in a kind of productive and very creative daze where I produced a number of illustrations and co-composed and recorded a couple of the best songs I've ever written ("Hair of the Snake that Bit Me" and "Town of Lights." if anyone's remotely interested), I switched to a more analytical mode and began to formulate my Idea Space model, as alluded to above and elsewhere. By this time, my family and associates had become reassured that I was certainly no *less* rational, functional, and creative than I had been before, so they either shrugged and let me get on with it or else actively encouraged me to discourse upon the subject because they found it interesting too.

Basically, I didn't have to "act normal" or to publicly deny that such a thing had seemingly happened to me. I'm personally glad about this, because it allows a continuity of identity, with less potential schism or confusion between the external or internal world as a result.

In addition to this, it strikes me that maybe people sort of expect guys with haircuts and beards like mine to rave and prophesy every once in a while, and so don't pay it much attention. You've probably just got the wrong hairstylist, Dave. Maybe I could set myself up as an image consultant and spin doctor to the discriminating necromancer.

Okay, so the above is the story as far as I'm concerned. My fictional Gull, although he too goes through a dreamy and drifting spaced-out period after his non-ordinary event, is running on a very different program. What happens with Gull, the sense of almost post-coital flatness that descends upon him, is more influenced by the classic personality profile of the serial murderer than it is by my own experiences.

Your classic, textbook serial murderers will often seem to reach a point where whatever complex and iterative emotional equation they were working through has evidently been resolved. At this point, sometimes perhaps they kill themselves. More often, they will either give themselves to the police (like Ed Kemper did) or make deliberately shoddy mistakes in their work that they know will lead the police straight to them (like Henry

Lee Lucas did). Kemper, who would rape, kill, and decapitate his victims, sometimes even in that order, finally murdered his mother, whom it might be argued he had been trying to get up the nerve to murder all along, his other victims being only surrogates — rehearsals. After this climactic and cathartic homicide, Kemper gave himself up to the police. When they asked him why he hadn't just carried on killing, he seemed puzzled by the question and replied, "There wouldn't have been any point." The program had run its course. The final calculation had been made. There wouldn't have been any point.

This is what happens to Gull: he reaches his pinnacle. He plants his ensanguined flag. The expedition, the ascent, is concluded. There is nowhere to go but down, into aftermath. The fuel rod of purpose is spent. Rather than asking, "What doth the Lord require of me?" Gull realises that, his task concluded, he is no longer required for anything, or at least not by the Lord. The long climb down, the decline towards his death amongst the straws of an Islington asylum, begins. As for what exactly is going through his mind, I really couldn't tell you. I suppose you'd have had to be there.

Actually, I made the conscious decision some time ago — perhaps seven or eight years — to make myself look normal. Part and parcel of the decision to portray a normal person. No good. Doesn't matter how short my hair is or how clean-shaven I am, people still look at me as if I just landed from Mars. But the point about yourself is well taken — speaking as an outside observer and listener, the hair and the beard aren't a patch on the eyes and the voice. Also, it turns out that my inward self ended up just having to go on a little fifteen-year (minus a week) stroll through...what's the phrase from Lennon's "Mind Games"? Through "Absolute Elsewhere." At that point my portrayal and my actual self remerged into a mostly blissful union, and (God willing) I look forward to them...us...ME living happily ever after. ("Heehee — 'Them,' he says." "All right, all right, that's enough.")

Now, there was a bit of a lapse between my last fax and your reply, and I had almost considered sending you a supplementary one. By asking, "What was your fictional Gull thinking about?" it would be easy to infer that you hadn't covered that. Which you had, and it was one of the most satisfying parts of the story to me. So, I felt (yes, Alan — FELT) bad in retrospect. Through the immediate aftermath of my own "lightning bolt" hitting, I can remember being on the cusp of really expressing something — really getting a handle on it — and someone asking me a really basic question which not only blew my train of thought to smithereens but really sapped me of that weird strength and super clarity that I was experiencing. "Dr. Gull? Are you fit to continue?" In the context of the hearing / trial it's a very basic question, but in Gull's own context, the residue of the "like unto a god" state he has achieved in the abattoir of Miller's Court, it would definitely echo and re-echo through the macrocosm and microcosm of his magnified awareness. "Hold on, I was just getting to...getting to...." and he really was. His perception of himself as the fulfilment of what the Masons are/always were/always wanted to be, the embodiment made flesh, as it were, facing the embodiment of the most ancient structure, the living edifice of the Masons. "Dr. Gull? Are you fit to continue?" It forces him to try himSELF in the upper reaches of what he has connected with. I read into it his own awarenesses shutting down like the lights going out on a skyscraper on each floor from the top down, the momentum carrying them past the lighted floor of even cursory consciousness, taking him from the indictment of those he saw as being as insects before him to being unable even to discern whether this was the trial part of his Eternal Moment or if he was still in Miller's Court. "No, I'm not fit to continue either as a would-be god OR as Dr Gull." And so he doesn't. And so he doesn't

It strikes me that the danger of these "lightning bolts" is in mistakenly interpreting them — or mucking in your own ego and personality with the actual...intention of them? If they can be said to have an intention. "The necessary ritual embarrassment of declaring myself to be a magician..." There is a lot of embarrassment involved, isn't there? On one hand, you KNOW what you experienced. You're really forced to describe them as "unusual mental phenomen(a)" when you know how inaccurate that is. Having just finished a biography of William Blake, I understand he suffered terribly from this. In many ways, he was the original self-publisher. I mean, I really want to do a good multilayered story with Cerebus, *and I have a compulsion to say a lot of probably too many — things in the six thousand pages But, man, at least I don't have a sense of being put here on Earth to put everything right. To me, Blake clearly thought he was Moses or Jacob or the heir to their legacy, anyway. Chosen by God to tell the world what really happened, get everyone to agree that every Renaissance painter he didn't like was a fraud and everyone he did like was a prophet or a beacon on the hill, everyone he liked was an angel from his personal God until he didn't like those people anymore, at which time they were one of the Legions of Hell sent to torment him. People like that I find very worrisome. Because it's difficult to discount him out of hand. Certainly the endurance of his work would tell us that he wasn't just a great design guy with a lousy finish, as he was popularly perceived at the time. But how much further "up" from there am I willing to go? And where does his crusty, envious-of-success, self-righteous human ego stop and the "enlightenment" begin?*

It's why I've always liked Robert Crumb's "Meatball" strip. "Meatball" bonks people on the head and has this variety of effects. Sometimes it's a whole city, and sometimes it's Kim Novak on the Tonight Show *(that one really cracks me up). It's completely unpredictable, and it has as much in common with a pie-in-the-face as it does with Celestial Choirs.*

Any thoughts on this before we retreat from Gull and discuss the aftermath chapters?

Regarding Gull's glimpse of his trial and how a chance remark from "the future" reveals different

meanings when taken in the context of his "present," your summary is pretty well spot on.

As for the dangers of the visionary experience. I think that you're absolutely right to point out the problems of how our own desires, ego, and run-amok imaginations can easily lead us into delusion when interpreting such an experience. For my part, I regard my observations concerning magic and vision as part of an ongoing dialogue. Working on the basis that it's better to travel hopefully than to arrive, I try to avoid conclusions, no matter how juicy and tempting they may be. I'm afraid that I side with those boring and anti-poetical language revisionists on this one, the people who insist that the language should be revised so that the word "is" is removed and the phrase "seems to me to be" is substituted. (Robert Anton Wilson also usefully suggests the substitution of "sombunall," a contraction of "some but not all," for the word "all," but that's a different issue.)

By avoiding a definite conclusion (especially, say, a conclusion like "I am the Messiah"), what you tend to encourage instead is a kind of constantly self-modifying and unfixed model of how things are that doesn't get mired down in bottomless abstract concepts like "truth." It acknowledges that its view of the world was slightly different yesterday and may be utterly different in a year's time while still enabling one to work with and process the information at hand. The best way to explain what I mean is to court the embarrassment you mention by citing a personal example.

After my initial apparent experience with non-ordinary states in the early January of 1994, I went through a superficially similar but subjectively very different-seeming experience about a month later, in the February of that year. I'll leave out the details, but the upshot was that I found myself seemingly in conversation with an entity that at first identified itself as "One of the Nine Dukes," and then upon closer interrogation as "Asmoday." Its "body," when I asked it to show me what it looked like, consisted of a shifting and shimmering latticework of repeated spider motifs, all identical but at different scales. These, while keeping their colouring consistent, appeared to be constantly turning themselves inside out through a spatial dimension that was foreign to me, becoming on the reverse a similar shifting lattice, this time with a reiterated lizard motif. This would turn itself inside out and become the mesh of spiders again, and so on. As a constant background to this effect, there was a beautiful pattern composed of peacock's-tail eyes. The entire thing was like a 360-degree sphere or field of presence that surrounded my head, moving and speaking lucidly to me (and with great politeness and charm, it must be said).

As with my first experience, other magicians were with me at the time (although not the same people). I remarked to one of them at the time when I was apparently speaking to the supposed entity that it seemed to me that the creature's body was actually a sort of display, since a physical body would clearly have been completely redundant. I wondered if the "bodies" of such creatures aren't more in the nature of the "icons" that people use to represent themselves when surfing the net? Perhaps the perceived forms were more like compound symbols, characters in an unknown language that were meant to impart a kind of non-verbal information to us. At that moment, it struck me that the entity I appeared to be seeing was conveying to me several things by its apparent form: Firstly, it was highly skilled in mathematics and in the visual arts that pertained to mathematics. Secondly, it had at least one more spatial dimension to play with than I did, and it seemed to take an almost smug delight in pointing this fact out to me. There was a quality of likeable vanity that seemed to imply that the emotional range of the entity was not vastly different from that of a human being. (This has not been the case with some of the other "species" of imaginary creature that I like to imagine I've encountered, and thus seemed worth noting.)

Days later, after the experience, I did some research to see what I could find relating to the demon Asmoday, or Asmodeus as he is more often known. It seemed that Asmodeus is considered to be the patron demon of mathematics and handicraft, which fit in with my general perception of the creature but proved nothing one way or the other. There was also some fascinating material on this particular demon's ability to grant an "Asmodeus Flight," wherein the magician will be plucked up into the air by the demon and allowed to fly over his town. On looking down, the demon-borne conjuror would see all the houses below as if their roofs had been removed, so that the occupants inside could be seen going about their lives. This was a fascinating and compelling medieval image, but again didn't seem to signify for much.

Last year, my esteemed colleague Dave Gibbons called me with reference to something he'd come across in a cutting edge science/higher mathematics book called *Fourfield* by Tom Robbin. Mr. Robbin's fascinating book, a dissection of the theory and application of fourth-dimensional maths, takes time off at one point to wonder creatively about what a hypothetical four-dimensional life form, if such a thing existed, might look like to us. Basically, the author's best and most well-informed guess is that such creatures would most probably resemble a shimmering latticework of multiple copies of themselves, all at different scales. This made my ears perk up, and when I was later in receipt of a computer program allowing me to run models of some basic fourth-dimensional forms, I was intrigued to note that some of the other hyperspatial solids on display resembled the visible forms of other non-physical entities that I believed myself to have encountered.

Working from the hypothesis of entities existing at higher levels of space, the "Asmodeus Flight" fable suddenly seemed to have a lot of new possibilities: a three-dimensional human mind, plucked up into the higher reaches of the fourth-dimension by a higher-dimensional entity, and allowed to look down at the three-dimensional landscape below from a fourth-dimensional perspective. The houses, their interiors now visible in the same way the insides of a two-dimensional square are visible to us from up above in our third dimension, seem to the medieval eye to have had their roofs removed. Could it be that the sorcerer in question was actually seeing *around* the roofs and walls via the

perception of a fourth dimension beyond the three our world is apparently bounded by?

Now, the upshot of this long-winded digression is that, in light of the above, do I believe that I have actually spoken to a trans-physical four thousand-year-old entity first mentioned in *The Book of Tobit*? No. Do I therefore believe that I have *not* truly conversed with the aforesaid entity? No. I see no particular imperative for me to believe or conclude anything. Meeting the demon Asmodeus was an apparent experience I had. Getting out of bed this morning and having breakfast was another apparent experience. I do not choose to grant either the status of "reality." What I'm *most* tempted by is this whole fourth-dimensional hypothesis, which I find very exciting and which has the ring of "truth" about it, at least in my ears. Do I therefore believe it to be the Truth that gods, angels, demons, and Grey aliens are all actually higher-dimensional creatures, communicating with us through the veil of fourspace? No. It's a good story, though, and I'm very happy to play with it until I find a better or more satisfying one. This, to me, seems a very solid and practical survival strategy. It is admittedly difficult to practice it while in conversation with something that has four hundred eyes and scares the shit out of you, but I believe that such an approach is as close as I'm ever likely to get to sanity.

Moving on, this is not to say I disapprove of Billy Blake's approach to the territory. He walked in his visionary landscape of the mind and talked to his long-dead visionary peers nowhere save inside his skull (he freely admitted as much on some occasions), and yet had the will to insist upon his vision of the world — to insist that was the world in which he roamed and resided, a golden fourfold city of the imagination rather than the dung-jewelled gutters of Oxford Street. If he occasionally seems to have an inflated opinion of himself, it would seem to me only a natural counter-reaction to his seeming wretchedness and failure in all save the eyes of a few close friends (and, of course, posterity). You're right in naming him the first self-publisher, near as damn it, and I think that you might find more in common with him than there seems to be at first glance: a man who had a vision and decided that the best way to convey it was by devoting his life's work to an extended fantasy narrative, a symbolic world where invented characters would play out the drama of the creator's divine insight. Further to this, the work must be created entirely by the self: Blake did almost everything save build his printing press by hand or cut down the trees himself to make the paper. Maybe part of what puts people off about Blake is that he expressed so much of his vision in the language and symbols of the conventional Christian religion of his day, terms which have worn thin in contemporary ears. This is not to discount your own view of Blake of course, simply to suggest that my own is maybe a bit more forgiving and more prepared to overlook the occasional bout of hubris. Lord knows, Dave, we're not above the occasional bout of hubris ourselves, are we? And we haven't even written *London* or painted *Glad Day* yet.

Which biography are you reading, incidentally? Gilchrist's is still probably the most basic and the best, but I very much liked Peter Ackroyd's recent contribution. You've probably got the Albert Goldman "Blake: Saint or Shit-heel?" biography where Blake mainlines a quart jug of Laudanum, exposes himself to neighbourhood children through the privet hedge of his back garden, and refers to the Angel Raphael as a "fucking dress-wearing kike bastard" in private correspondence to the artist Fuseli, whom Blake addresses as "Gloria."

Not so exalted as Gilchrist but not as degraded as Goldman, I'm forced to admit. I mean, I knew when I picked it up that a two-hundred-page Blake biography (the author's name is James King) could constitute little more than a children's Big Golden Book of Billy Blake and His Friends. What few illustrations there are are in muddy black and white, so to say I had no high expectations in the realm of the definitive is to understate the case dramatically. Actually, I was taking a break between reading the Old Testament and plunging into the Apocrypha (since the Bible in question is a reproduction of the 1611 King James Translation, I was amused when I took notice of the biographer's name) Since I came to the Bible by way of Malcolm Muggeridge's A Third Testament *(talk about man's reach exceeding his grasp!) and his autobiography, and Muggeridge's pantheon is pretty firmly established around Blake, Pascal, St. Augustine, and a handful of others, I thought I owed it to the old reprobate to at least skim a "Life of..." before looking at the actual work in one of those lavish coffee-table editions which are our present age's most visible testimony to that which endures — or, at least, that which has endured thus far. Since Muggeridge, by his own admission, spent most of his creative energies in the sewer environs of newspaper and television "journalism" basically lying to others (and himself) for money, I think a lot of Blake's appeal to Muggeridge is his "seeming wretchedness and failure" That is, Blake stayed true to himself and his own sense of what is right and what is wrong, and to a Muggeridge that's a lofty plateau to which to aspire, indeed. Blake's chosen road — to Muggeridge — must've seemed separated from that of Our Lord and Saviour Himself only by a degree. You know? Jesus cleared the bar at sixteen feet, Blake managed eight feet, and dear Old Muggs was hard-pressed to get his ass over it at four feet -- and in his own heart attributed this to his inability to forsake all riches and the kingdoms of this world and go forth naked before the etc., etc., etc. That is, I think Muggeridge saw Blake as a Job-like figure, tested and tormented at every turn, whose faith endured and who, consequently, at the Pearly Gates got a straight-A report card with a B-minus for deportment. My vantage point, structurally, being a little closer to Blake — keeping Cerebus away from movies, television, lunch boxes, etc. — I tended not to see the Christ-like heroism in Blake that Muggeridge did. What I saw was a fellow who was unable to see the truth in how he was assessed by his peers, great design, lousy finish, and who was forever* losing *himself in hubris — to me at a wide remove from*

the "occasional bouts of hubris" to which any human being is prone. Although he was a prayerful man, I pictured him to be always praying to have the world rearranged so it was a little more sensible — you know, with, like, William Blake on top dispensing the Word of God to the great unwashed. It never seemed to occur to him (I mean, literally*) that he might be better served by taking a bath himself. Muggeridge, of course, is an entirely different figure in England than he is elsewhere. He didn't declare himself a Christian until well into his twilight years, and — not surprisingly — this was greeted with a great deal of derision, i.e., you've only decided to forego the pleasures of the flesh because you can't get it up anymore and it galls you that others can. I saw a great deal in common with Blake in this — that much of his excessive zeal came from wanting to externalise the torments that his penis getting hard caused him. Once Blake subsides and stops throwing everyone out of his life and trying to pass off his personal prejudices and preferences in art and wisdom as divine in origin, he gets a nice little circle of acolytes to hang on his every word, kneel at his feet, and kiss his door-knocker on the way in for a visit. Which to me looked like just another submission to his own hubris and was probably more attributable to God rewarding his wife Catherine for putting up with the curmudgeon-from-birth than any kind of reward for Blake himself. But perhaps not. I think there's a persuasive argument to be made that creativity of any kind is an allegory or microcosm of whatever is taking place inside the eternal moment in our lifetimes. And maybe it was standing room only in the vaults of the heavens when Blake sat down to write and illustrate a poem, and you couldn't give away complimentary passes to whatever Napoleon was scribbling in his notebook that night*

Do you know what I mean?

Uh...actually, I'm not entirely sure I do. The end of the first page of your fax was cut off, so that for several uncomfortable instants I thought you were suggesting some sort of relationship between Catherine Blake and Malcolm Muggeridge, which really would have been going too far.

I'd agree any creative work acts as a microcosm…if a blurred and inexact one…for the entirety of what I'd call conceptual space and what Blake would call Heaven. I wouldn't even qualify it as conceptual space as it is "during our lifetimes" since to me the essential nature of conceptual space is that it is instantaneous, a hyper-moment filling the entirety of the continuum, in which all other moments are subsumed like specks in amber. In Heaven, in Olympus, in Asgard, in Satori, in Restau, in Dreamtime there is a large, radiant and complex event that is constantly in the process of occurring. Osiris wasn't dismembered in the past. Isis didn't reassemble him and impregnate herself upon him in some remote historical or prehistoric time, nor is the subsequent birth of Horus on a recorded date so that we can send the guy a greetings card. It could be said just as accurately of these dreamtime events that they will occur in the far future or that they are occurring right this moment now. The "once upon a time" parenthesis with which we bracket our fondest myth-events is careful not to say *which* time. Angels, as Immanuel Swedenborg insisted, know nothing of time.

Anyway, I'm probably misconstruing your point entirely here. Are you suggesting that there might be a case that William Blake, despite his many undisputed personality problems, may have had more access to "Heaven" than an entirely different sort of intellect and visionary like, say, Napoleon? If that *is* what you were asking, then I suppose I'd have to say that without wishing to make pointless comparisons between two such dissimilar men, it might be possible that they both travelled in the same territory but visited vastly different resorts. Some systems, like for example the Qabalah of the Western Mystery tradition, divide what I'd call Idea Space and Blake would call Heaven into a number of distinct zones. To vastly oversimplify, Napoleon's specific form of Sephiroth, known as Geburah: the red, martial sphere of stern judgement. Blake's work and published thoughts would seem to me to place him in the region of the sixth, solar sphere, known as Tiphareth.

Actually, looked at according to a model like this, a different reading of Blake's hubris is possible; each of the spheres in the system has various attributes and associations, as if each sphere were like a drawer in the overall filing cabinet of the whole array. (This is one model of the "bigger filing cabinet" I mentioned earlier.) The solar sphere of Tiphareth is associated with risen solar redeemer figures such as Jesus, Bacchus, Apollo, Horus, and so on. Each sphere has its own particular "virtue" and its own "vice." In the earthly sphere of Malkuth, for example, the specific vice could be said to be "inertia" and the virtue "discrimination." In Tiphareth, the virtue is "Dedication to the Great Work," which would take too long to explain, and the vice is "pride."

My probably imperfect understanding of what is meant by pride in this context came during a magical exploration of the sixth sphere, undertaken as usual with one of my similarly minded associates, in this instance a musician. At one point during the event, I got carried away with a self-serving monologue on how special and wonderful creative people were, completely opiated by my own marvellousness. At this point, my glazed and trancing companion spoke for the first time in twenty minutes, making a single, gnomic utterance: "A gold pig."

As soon as he'd said it he looked puzzled, told me that the phrase had just popped into his head, and advised me to ignore it as meaningless, which of course I was unable to do. It struck me, at the time, as a perfect image of the pride of artists: a gold pig. Flashy, brilliant, and valuable, but also vaguely squalid, absurd, and tasteless. It seemed to me that creators should not confuse themselves with whatever light comes through them. At best, they can take comfort in the clarity and lucidity of the window that their work lets the light into the world by. They can try not to block the light with their own shadow, they can try to widen their window or aperture, and they can take satisfaction in their success at this. But they are not the light. I suppose that sometimes a window might look down at the wonderful long rectangle of late-afternoon gold that it's casting across

the floorboards, at the Brownian gavotte of the dust particles in its falling shafts, and believe itself to be the Sun. I'm not saying that I personally believe this to be the case with William Blake, just that it might support your different view of the man.

Anyway, this has almost certainly nothing to do with whatever you were asking. Let's get back to this Cath Blake/Malcolm Muggeridge thing. What have you heard?

From what I'm given to understand, in the Great By and By, Old Muggs (having been summarily dismissed as an overenthusiastic fanboy and edged out of Blake's chat circle) has latched onto Catherine and is boring her senseless with a recitation of his conversations with Mother Teresa. "You really MUST meet her when she gets here. I — heheh — I really MUST tell you about this SPLENDID letter that she sent me after the SECOND interview I did with her — did I mention that I interviewed her TWICE...well, anyway..." I picture Catherine — with glacial smile — endeavouring to catch her husband's eye. Mr. Blake (she always called him that, didn't she?), who IS this creature?

On the contrary, I think you provide a very adequate working model for what I was talking about. I intentionally used the phrase "the vault of the heavens" as opposed to "Heaven" for that very reason. I was being something of "a gold pig" myself in passing judgement on Blake based on an — at best — cursory examination of his life. Who am I to pretend to speculate authoritatively about Blake's prayers and their character (or lack thereof)? I mean, there's nothing wrong with speculation but it is important to differentiate between authoritative speculation, and rumination. There is a persuasive argument to be made — or at least food for thought — that by pursuing the life of a prophet, as Blake seemed to do, using his engravings of Dante's work (just as an example) to "correct" Dante, puts him outside the parameters of my own meager jurisdiction. Whether he was misapprehended in doing this, overstepping his bounds in a profound sense, he did seem to make the choice to enter the Big Arena in doing so and any criticism or deprecation of him in which I indulge myself has much in common with a fat-ass couch potato holding forth on how the wide receiver SHOULD have run that last play.

One of my more enduring ruminations has been that reality is a succession of hierarchies. That we are observed by those on the next level up and those on the next level up from them and so on. 99.9% of what we do, say, write, and in all ways concern ourselves with has much in common with — say — a Gilligan's Island *marathon of many centuries' duration. I think we are as excruciating as that to them. But just as there are diamonds in a coal field, every once in a great while there comes along someone whose works are worth watching — and every once in a greater while, someone who engages the attentions of a handful of presences on the second or third level up. Ergo — the Big Arena I've alluded to. Given Blake's own devout belief in his God and his own belief in retribution for a sin committed, the fact that he endured and was not cut off before his time and achieved a measure of peace in his last years would indicate the Large Possibility that he was Onto Something. That, although his meticulously assembled lifelong creative work looks (for the most part) like fevered gibberish to me, the case could be made that in the "next circle up" he had untied some Gordian knot or solved a long-standing riddle or presented some new Gordian knot or long-standing riddle for consideration in the course of his work. Perhaps the untying and solving could be attributed to the Heavenly, and the creation of knots and riddles could be attributed to the Infernal — but, to me, this sort of territory moves into the Dangerously Ruminative — which might be the instrument of my own destruction I inadvertently created by engineering a vehicle for near-total creative freedom.*

But, finishing the previous thought, if there is any veracity in my rumination, it is not hard to picture how Blake COULD be one of the elect. As someone who sees himself (as it were) watching the Big Arena on a snow-grizzled television screen, I did want to allow of the possibility — while still allowing the possibility of my previous rumination.

"A gold pig" on a smaller scale, served the same purpose that "Are you fit to continue, Dr. Gull" served in From Hell, *didn't it? It seems to me that the wisest ambition of the creative-type type is to develop the facility to recognise the significance of these...resonant admonishments?...where they occur and try to reduce the frequency of their occurrences.*

I would agree with you (ruminatively) that there is an existence composed of Pure Light at the upper reaches of these hierarchies that I picture — mirroring itself in our own world in those individuals who choose to go through life praying ,and/or meditating, eating little, and having few or no possessions. Perhaps the spheres that you've described constitute spheres of containment for those who just can't "let go" of hierarchies, judgement, dedication, etc. Like Gull at the end of From Hell *(finally! A reference to what we're supposed to be talking about), rising and falling, but clearly trapped within the confines of what-he-has-made-himself-into. He has always been Gull, he has always been Tom, he has always been Jack the Ripper, he has always been Blake's "Ghost of a Flea." There are a lot of different ways to read your ending to the book. Everything is pre-destined, whatever Alan Moore is and is a part of and everything that you do or say and everything that happens to you has always happened to you. Or is this what you're saying? Is there such a thing as free will or if — as an example — you choose to move to Hollywood tomorrow, you have always chosen to move to Hollywood? I use this as an example because I can think of few things more unlikely than Alan Moore moving to Hollywood. Any ruminations — or authoritative speculations — on this one?*

i.e. Do you see any merit in doing something you yourself would perceive as being at the outer thresholds of likelihood (knowing yourself and what is likely and unlikely for that "self" as you perceive that "self")?

What a great cliff-hanger, eh? Continued in part three next month.

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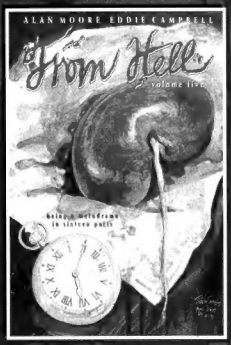

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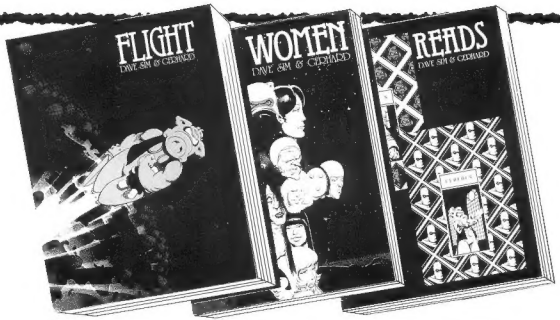

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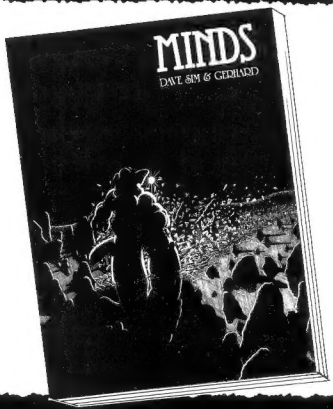

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